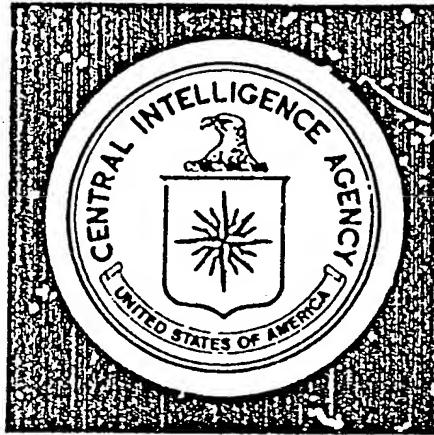


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Research Study

*Brezhnev's Personal Authority and
Collectivity in the Soviet Leadership*

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Memorandum for: Recipients of Subject
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Subject: : Errata Sheet to PR 76 100 20C
Page 14.

The second sentence of second paragraph
on page 14 of referenced document should
read as follows:

Soviet successes in improving the USSR's
position in certain third world areas (e.g.,
Angola), while casting a pall over US-Soviet
relations, also reduce Brezhnev's vulnerability
to any allegations that his policies vis-a-vis
the West adversely affect Soviet opportunities
or unduly constrain Soviet policies in other
parts of the world.

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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A C E N C Y
D I R E C T O R A T E O F I N T E L L I G E N C E
O F F I C E O F P O L I T I C A L R E S E A R C H

March 1976

BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL AUTHORITY AND COLLECTIVITY
IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP

[]

NOTE: During the preparation of this study other CIA offices were consulted, but formal coordination was not sought. Comments will be welcomed by the author []

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PRINCIPAL JUDGMENTS

The Soviet leadership today remains a collective decision-making body. The Politburo meets regularly to decide jointly on key policy moves. Certain top leaders--some of them by no means pliant instruments of Brezhnev--exercise considerable influence in important policy areas, and the General Secretary takes care to maintain a supporting consensus for his own positions. Nonetheless, Brezhnev clearly is the focal point of the Soviet political machine and has eclipsed the other ranking leaders in setting the direction of major policies. His pre-eminence was confirmed at the recent Soviet Party congress, where he delivered the main address and received high praise from all Soviet speakers.

The increase in Brezhnev's personal authority and prestige in recent years has been assisted by and reflected in his control of Soviet foreign policy. He formed a private secretariat to help him conduct summit negotiations and frame policy guidelines, and he took the lead in expanding relations with major Western countries. His chairmanship of the Defense Council has contributed considerably to his ability to dominate national security issues, especially SALT, and the promotion to full Politburo membership in the last three years of all the top officials with a key role in national security policy has strengthened Brezhnev's direct influence in this key area. Brezhnev's ability to protect his position within the Politburo has been even more convincingly demonstrated over the same period by the removal of four members who either had given him political trouble or had not been closely allied with him. In addition, Brezhnev has become predominant in economic policy.

While Brezhnev remains clearly ascendant, several factors which have emerged in the last two to three years bear on the distribution and exercise of power within the leadership:

- the reduction in Brezhnev's activity owing to health problems and the related question of political succession, and
- the downturn in US-Soviet relations.

A further reduction in Brezhnev's political activity could bring about the fuller exercise of collective leadership and even more deliberateness in decision-making. In fact, the age alone of the senior leadership (Brezhnev is 69; the others average nearly 72) may encourage some of the current younger leaders to assert their voices more vigorously on policy questions as they begin to think increasingly of ensuring their own political future when Brezhnev is gone.

Whether Brezhnev has exercised his personal influence on recent Soviet foreign policies out of personal conviction or in order to stay within the bounds of the existing leadership consensus, the narrowed field of maneuver available to him with regard to detente has entailed at least a loss of momentum for him politically. Yet Brezhnev's authority appears in the aftermath of the congress to be stronger than seemed to be the case several months ago, and to the extent this factor is critical to the next steps in US-Soviet relations, Brezhnev is evidently in a better position than before to make his personal preferences count. And however much he or the leadership as a whole may wish to delay new policy initiatives in such areas as SALT until after the pressures of the US election subside, they also entertain fears that continued drift in US-Soviet relations may give stronger political voice to "anti-Soviet" elements in the US and further jeopardize their own interests.

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"THE HIGHEST PRINCIPLE OF PARTY LEADERSHIP"

In Theory. The leaders of all Party organs in the USSR are charged with carrying out their responsibilities in a collective spirit, which is to be guaranteed by means of thorough discussion and joint decision-making. Failure to observe this precept provides grounds for dismissal of Party leaders at any level. Ukrainian First Secretary Shcherbitsky recently had a regional secretary removed for having "infringed Party principles," one charge being that he "disregarded collectivity in the settlement of important problems." Stalin and Khrushchev were accused essentially of violating the principle of collectivity by allowing the development of "personality cults" centered on themselves; the former was indicted posthumously, but such charges figured explicitly in Khrushchev's removal from office.

Collectivity has come to be valued highly because so much of previous Soviet history has demonstrated vividly the dangers of personal rule. A common sense of self-preservation puts the Soviet leaders on guard against signs of excessive ambition by any of their number and leads them to approve a theory of leadership that makes the re-establishment of autocratic methods less likely. Additionally, the growing complexity of administering contemporary Soviet society makes highly personalized rule an increasingly difficult mode of leadership. Although the Politburo retains centralized political control, the representation today within that body of major contending interests creates pressures for the sharing of power among its members.

And in Practice: The Khrushchev Experience. Although the concept of collectivity is imbedded in the political and ideological framework of the USSR, its practical application within the Politburo has varied. The basic Soviet political goals--pervasive political control, the mobilization of resources for economic growth, and maximum physical security for the nation--require strong, centralized leadership. The Party chief has traditionally been permitted considerable latitude to initiate policy and manipulate the Party machinery,

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and he is free to seek to enlarge his area of political control and influence as far as his colleagues will permit him to do so. The lack of constitutional or Party rules defining his authority is largely responsible for the continuing importance of personal struggle in Politburo politics and the shifts in emphasis between collectivity and one-man rule.

After Stalin died, his successors assigned different men to the topmost Party and government posts. But there was no firm agreement, formal or tacit, to deny preeminence to any single leader, and Khrushchev was able to exploit the fluid leadership conditions of the mid-1950s to his own benefit. He accumulated personal power and acquired a momentum for major policies he advocated. Collectivity suffered. His colleagues found themselves increasingly reacting to his initiatives and less able to restrain or oppose his actions and exercise power on their own.

Khrushchev was not, however, another Stalin; he needed policy successes in order to maintain his political position. His style of leadership aroused dissatisfaction among high Soviet officials, including but not limited to his Politburo colleagues. He intervened personally in lower-echelon Party meetings, announced initiatives not previously cleared among the top central leadership, encouraged the public "personality cult" that grew up around him, appeared not to recognize limits to his behavior, and showed increasing disregard for the niceties of discussion and compromise within the Politburo.

These actions left his colleagues feeling insecure and evoked concern throughout the wider circle of mid-level Party leaders who felt threatened by his Party reorganization scheme and the requirement for mandatory replacement periodically of a portion of the membership of key Party bodies. The resulting impression of Khrushchev's capriciousness and personal rule might not have been sufficient by itself to do him in. But combined with policy setbacks, it provided a core issue around which the other leaders could coalesce with a feeling of restoring legitimacy in ousting him.

THE REASSERTION OF COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The Sharing of Authority. With the memory of Khrushchev's "errors" fresh in their minds, the Soviet leaders moved in the months following his ouster to establish a carefully apportioned distribution of power among themselves and to alter the style and internal operations of their leadership. It was agreed that in peacetime no one leader would again be allowed to hold simultaneously the top Party and government posts. Brezhnev and Kosygin took over these two positions immediately and have remained in them ever since. A third individual, first Mikoyan and then Podgorny, has occupied the third-ranking office, that of titular head of state. For several years the holders of these three posts were accorded near-equal public status, and they are sometimes still called collectively the "troika." Foreign policy representational functions were divided at first fairly evenly among the three, and various members of the Politburo have exercised responsibility for working out policies on important domestic matters.

The choice of Brezhnev to become the top Party leader was probably made with the intent to put into the most important leadership position a person not likely to violate the new mutual commitment to collectivity. He had been the obvious successor to Khrushchev both because of his key position in the Secretariat, which involved broad responsibilities and was second only to that of the First Secretary, and because of his extensive background, which included jobs dealing with agriculture and industry, in regional and central Party posts, and as top political officer in the navy. []

To signal their new emphasis on leadership stability, the successors did not remove any other active member from the Politburo along with Khrushchev.* They did away with the organizational

*Kozlov, an opponent of Khrushchev and one-time heir apparent, was removed one month later, but for genuine health reasons: he had suffered a debilitating stroke more than a year before, had been politically inactive, and died early in 1965.

structures and rules that had upset many Party regulars in the early 1960s and made Central Committee meetings more regularized and businesslike. In 1966 the leaders changed the name of the top Party organ from Presidium to Politburo and the name of the top Party office from First to General Secretary to distinguish their leadership symbolically from that of the Khrushchev period.

The Conduct of Politburo Business. In addition to creating an atmosphere of leadership stability and reducing dissatisfactions within the Party, the post-Khrushchev leaders established orderly processes for their own operations in a conscious effort to develop a workable system of shared power.

Decision-making on major issues normally follows a weekly cycle. Typically, on Monday the General Secretary reviews draft proposals from the other leaders for possible consideration by the Politburo. On Tuesday the Secretariat, with Brezhnev presiding, makes up an agenda of items for Politburo consideration. On Wednesday Kosygin convenes the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, which discusses agenda items and prepares positions relevant to them for Politburo attention. On Thursday the Politburo meets to discuss the agenda issues and act on draft proposals. The agenda is restricted to a rather small number of important matters, in contrast to the practice under Khrushchev of crowding it with secondary items. Any Politburo member may raise an issue for consideration, but detailed discussion and final decision on new questions are usually deferred.

Individual leaders often develop proposals related to their particular policy specialties, sometimes heading commissions formed to study specific questions. Central Committee secretaries prepare proposals relevant to their respective policy concerns, coordinating the input of the appropriate Central Committee departments and government organs. The most important national security matters are taken up by the Defense Council, which consists of the top three leaders plus other top national security officials, and draws up policies for Politburo approval. In addition to the procedures geared to the regular Politburo meetings, there is a formal coordination process for the numerous other matters that require Politburo-level attention. The secretary responsible for the policy question at issue often coordinates proposals among the Politburo leaders.

Although this policy-making process is intended to serve the principle of collective leadership, Brezhnev is clearly its focal point and provides much of its direction. He controls the schedule of Politburo meetings, the attendance at them of non-Politburo members, and the content and order of the agenda. At the Politburo sessions themselves, he presides, presents issues for consideration, sums up the discussions, and expresses the consensus reached. If there is substantial disagreement on a question, Brezhnev may call for a vote to decide the issue. If he believes that the discussion is moving against the direction he favors, he may defer decision until another time. He may even be able in such cases to sway the decision by stating his views last and using the weight of his personal authority as General Secretary. But so far as we know, he cannot override a clear Politburo majority.

BREZHNEV EMERGES PREEMINENT

Chairman Brezhnev. Using the advantages inherent in his position as de facto chief executive of the USSR, Brezhnev has emerged in the 1970s as the preeminent Soviet leader. The process has been gradual and incremental, but the result is unmistakable. In the 1960s the top three leaders had received carefully constructed even-handed

public treatment. Although Brezhnev had emerged in 1965 as the main architect of agricultural policy, Kosygin had introduced the major economic reorganization adopted that year and served until 1970 as the principal Soviet spokesman on strategic arms limitations policy. But in 1970 public mention of Brezhnev in Pravda and in the USSR Supreme Soviet election campaign became noticeably more prominent relative to the attention accorded the other ranking leaders, and a collection of his speeches and articles was published.

The clearest public reflection of Brezhnev's rise has been the increased number of references to the "Politburo headed by" General Secretary Brezhnev. This explicit acknowledgement of Brezhnev's position as Politburo chairman appeared infrequently in the early 1970s, but since 1973 the phrase has been normal, almost obligatory, in important public statements. It was used extensively in the preliminaries to the 25th Party Congress, and at the congress itself Brezhnev's personal role was highlighted by all Soviet speakers. Although the authority of the Central Committee is usually also cited on these occasions, the singling out of Brezhnev clearly indicates his ascendancy over his colleagues and weakens the principle of collectivity.

Brezhnev has, however, attained prominence without violating the leadership procedures set up after 1964 to ensure collectivity, barring a few instances where he may have overstepped the boundaries of his prerogatives. At some Party meetings--including most recently the congress--he has interrupted speakers with impromptu comments, thereby drawing attention to himself and displaying a trait pointedly reminiscent of Khrushchev. There have also reportedly been instances in which he has taken a foreign policy initiative that was subsequently questioned by other senior leaders as not having been previously agreed upon. For example, it has been rumored in Moscow that Brezhnev was criticized by other leaders in December 1974 for his method of negotiating the SALT accord at Vladivostok, having in effect come back to Moscow and requested the Politburo to ratify a fait accompli.

These examples stand out as exceptional against the general pattern of Brezhnev's frequent consultation with his colleagues. While he does identify himself with particular policy lines, he constantly seeks to build support for them and has reportedly or at least one occasion been unwilling to override the views of a significant minority in his efforts to attain a Politburo consensus before reaching final decisions. It is apparent that Brezhnev has profited from his predecessor's example and avoided his failings. Brezhnev leads, but he treats the other leaders respectfully and does not demand that they follow his lead unquestioningly.

Instrumentalities of Power. Brezhnev's personal role and prestige grew first out of his handling of foreign policy. Brezhnev took the lead in organizing the machinery needed for the USSR to play an increasingly active role in international politics by forming a personal secretariat to help him conduct foreign policy and by framing major policy guidelines himself. His presentation of the "Peace Program" was the centerpiece of the 24th Party Congress in 1971. In 1972, although there were several key meetings among the Soviet leaders to make collective decisions during the Moscow summit, Brezhnev was the principal Soviet negotiator of the final SALT agreement provisions. He received special credit for the summit results, and he alone signed the agreements for the Soviet side.*

Brezhnev's chairmanship of the Defense Council has contributed considerably to his ability to come to dominate foreign policy, especially national security issues. In addition, his relationship with Defense Minister Grechko has been particularly close--on the eve of the 1972 summit Brezhnev [] expressed []

*He signed as General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, an unprecedented act and one quite surprising to many observers since the title is not that of a state office. By doing so, he pointedly emphasized the capacity of the Party chief to act on the most important matters on behalf of the nation. Brezhnev has been accorded the full measure of head-of-state honors during visits to the capitals of major Western states, including the US.

that this fact had been valuable to him politically. The promotion to full Politburo membership in April 1973 of Foreign Minister Gromyko, KGB chief Andropov, and Grechko placed the heads of important ministries--already key actors in foreign policy-making and participants in Defense Council deliberations--more closely and clearly under Brezhnev's direct influence as chairman of the Politburo and further undercut Kosygin's authority in foreign affairs and within his own cabinet.

Even more convincing evidence of Brezhnev's ability to affect high-level appointments and improve his position on the Politburo lies in the departures engineered in 1973-1975. Until that time the only full members ousted since 1964 had been old-timers Mikoyan and Shvernik, both in their seventies when they left. But in the last three years three Politburo members who had, in one way or another, given Brezhnev trouble have been eased out: Voronov, the main exponent of an alternative approach to agriculture; Shelest, the most outspoken critic of detente and an incisive promoter of local Ukrainian interests; and Shelepin, who may have raised the issue of succession in the winter of 1974-1975.

In addition to his leadership in foreign policy and influence over appointments, Brezhnev has also become the chief spokesman for major domestic policies, primarily at Kosygin's expense. Brezhnev's agricultural policy, which stresses massive investments, remained in force after the bad harvest years of 1972 and 1975 and has been incorporated in the draft 1976-1980 economic plan. Recently another large program initiated by Brezhnev for developing the agricultural potential of the more northern arable lands has been undertaken.

In contrast, Kosygin's economic policies have been played down and their effectiveness seriously eroded. His stricture in the 1960s against the Party's dictating economic management decisions has given way in the 1970s to Brezhnev's emphasis on Party guidance and activism in economic affairs. Brezhnev has felt free to intervene directly in deliberations of Kosygin's Council of Ministers and has attacked central economic management organs for failing to implement programs and solve problems. [redacted]

Preeminence, but not Supremacy. The very basis of Brezhnev's strength contains implicit limits on his power. By sticking to his cautious style of consensus-building and keeping a finger on the Politburo pulse, Brezhnev has prevented the formation of organized opposition to his preeminent position. But any effort to expand his personal rule to a significant degree or in any unprecedented manner would likely disturb the personal confidence and satisfaction his colleagues have in his leadership.

Within the Party Brezhnev continues to enjoy the respect and support of Central Committee-level officials and a degree of personal popularity in mid-level and regional circles. But his control over Party cadres is not absolute. There is no pattern of his successfully "packing" the Politburo or Secretariat to make them pliant instruments of his will, and the influence of other leaders is still felt along with his own. In Brezhnev's absence other Politburo-level secretaries have sometimes acted as Politburo chairman (usually Kirilenko, but also Suslov and Kulakov). Kosygin, Podgorny, and Ustinov are members of the Defense Council, and Suslov remains a powerful force in the Secretariat. While a Brezhnev supporter, Kirilenko, is positioned as Brezhnev's chief deputy and heir apparent, individuals less obviously allied with Brezhnev have also attained full Politburo membership since 1964, notably Mazurov and Grishin. The length of time sometimes required to settle appointments to certain key posts suggests intra-Politburo tugging and pulling, with no group able to gain majority support for its choice. A new Soviet constitution and grand 1976-1990 economic plan, projects that Brezhnev has associated himself with, have also plainly run into hard going.

NEW FACTORS AFFECTING COLLECTIVITY

Several developments in the last two to three years bear on the distribution and exercise of power within the leadership: the reduction of Brezhnev's activity and the related question of his succession; and the "pause" in detente with the US.

The Winter of Brezhnev's Discontent. In the winter of 1974-1975 Brezhnev was out of action for an extended period of time owing to illness.

[redacted] between the end of November 1974 and mid-March 1975 he probably missed all but one of the regular weekly Politburo meetings. He postponed a trip to Egypt in late December and emerged from confinement into public view only on a few occasions until March.

[redacted] The fall of 1974 had been a rough period in US-Soviet relations, and despite the partial SALT success at Vladivostok, Brezhnev was probably disappointed over the outcome of the emigration-MFN-credits imbroglio. How much domestic political activity Brezhnev undertook privately while hospitalized or resting at his dacha we do not know [redacted]

Only one major policy decision was announced during this period. In January, responding to US legislative actions taken the previous month, the USSR renounced its obligations under the 1972 US-USSR Trade Agreement. How much and in what way Brezhnev influenced the taking of this decision is uncertain. The US actions affecting credits and emigration and the initial Soviet objections to them occurred before Brezhnev entered the hospital. He may have made known his willingness to go along with the Soviet reaction--or even led the move himself--because of either the merit

of the position itself in his eyes or his reading of the Soviet political atmosphere after the autumn wrangling with the US over the issues. But the actual Soviet renunciation came after Brezhnev had been confined [] and it is possible that his political influence was not fully brought to bear.

There were several signs of renewed emphasis on collectivity in the Soviet press during the 1974-1975 winter. In December and January there were instances where the omission of Brezhnev's name stood out, and most pointed of all, a major Pravda article referring to collective leadership was published in January. Its author, P. A. Rodionov, First Deputy Director of the Central Committee's Institute of Marxism-Leninism, had published in 1974 two other articles on this theme and a second edition of his definitive book on this subject, Collectivity --The Highest Principle of Party Leadership, and he was honored this year by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. There were also several reports [] that Shelepin had been a part of or led a move in December or January to unseat Brezhnev or to undercut h's detente policy.

Kirilenko deputized for Brezhnev during his absence, organizing leisure activities for the leaders as well as chairing the Politburo sessions. However, he and the other leaders kept low political profiles during this period. []

The "Pause" in Detente. Since that winter signs of Brezhnev's preeminence have continued to be mixed with indications of constraints on him. At the April 1975 Central Committee plenum Shelepin was removed from the Politburo, but the resolution adopted then contained pointed references to the dangerous aspects of detente and the need for vigilance, suggesting increased reservations within the leadership about the course of Soviet foreign policy. The resolution also seemed less laudatory of Brezhnev than was the case in April 1973 when his report to the plenum and his "personal contribution" toward ensuring peace were noted. The April 1975 resolution also seemed to indicate that responsibility for foreign policy was to be more widely shared within the leadership. Gromyko

gave the main report, and the Central Committee gave its approval and support to both Brezhnev and the Politburo as a whole.

Through much of 1975 conflicting signals were emitted from Moscow on important questions related to foreign policy, such as how to interpret the economic and political difficulties in the West, how to handle events in Portugal, and how to conduct relations with West European Communist parties. Brezhnev did push the European Security Conference through to a successful conclusion in the summer of 1975, and he received extensive publicity and credit for his role. But the aftertaste of Helsinki quickly became bitter in Moscow as the Western nations made clear their intention to stress the human rights issues associated with the final CSCE document, and Brezhnev failed to achieve a SALT summit in the US before the 25th Party Congress. After the December 1975 Central Committee plenum, Shcherbitsky asserted that: "The collective wisdom and will of our Party are embodied in the theses and conclusions of L. I. Brezhnev's speech," a formulation that goes quite far in emphasizing Brezhnev's authority yet is mindful of the fundamental collectivity theoretically underlying Party policy-making.*

We are left, then, at present with a somewhat curious situation in which Brezhnev's authority and prestige remain high, but his premier policy of detente is resting in neutral. Brezhnev, alert to his colleagues' mood, may himself have modulated Soviet policy to stay within the bounds of existing consensus and ensure his position. Even if this is the case, however, the significantly narrowed field of maneuver available to Brezhnev with regard to detente, a policy he has used more than any other to promote his prominence, entails at least a loss of momentum for him politically.

The Question of Succession. Brezhnev's health problems may force a further reduction in his activity or, conceivably, take him from the scene suddenly (he has arteriosclerosis and

*Podgorny in 1974 referred to Brezhnev as the head of "our collective leadership," another seemingly contradictory formulation that both praises Brezhnev highly and recalls the concept of collectivity in the same breath.

reportedly uses a pacemaker). If Brezhnev's health worsens, Kirilenko's deputizing might well take on a more regular character. As long as Brezhnev remains in office and still oversees major policy affairs, however intermittently, Kirilenko would clearly remain subordinate to him. But a further reduction in Brezhnev's political participation would probably mean, at least for a while, the fuller exercise of collective leadership and even more deliberateness in decision-making.

If Brezhnev were to leave office in the near future, Kirilenko is the odds-on choice to succeed him as General Secretary. But he, like Brezhnev, is 69 years old, and his accession to power would not be a long-term solution to the problem of replacing Brezhnev. The current period thus is really one of pre-succession, in which the probable future contenders for the number-one spot are not yet in a position to reach for the top post itself.

If enough time and energy remain to Brezhnev, he may be able to preside over these pre-succession moves and manage to maintain a political balance among various individuals and groups. The leadership changes at the 25th Party Congress reflect the continuing commitment to stability, bringing the removal from the Politburo only of Polyansky, who was made the "fall guy" for the agricultural setback. Of the promotions made, the raising of Ustinov to full Politburo membership further strengthens the representation of national security officials; Romanov's similar promotion is a logical reward for a leader who has proved his capabilities in handling major regional responsibilities; and the entry into the Secretariat of Chernenko, head of the Central Committee's General Department and a long-time career associate of Brezhnev, buttresses Brezhnev's position in that important body. Yet, as time goes on, the other members of the top hierarchy--those now in place and others who may move up in the next year or two--are likely to think increasingly about ensuring their own political future when he is gone. The key political question would then become not how to keep Brezhnev's preeminence within bounds, but how to survive his replacement or, in some cases, how to become his replacement.

It is also possible that the period ahead will see Brezhnev attain an even stronger political position. This would be more likely if health, age, or politics were to lead to the departure or loss of influence of one or more of the other ranking leaders, such as Suslov, Kosygin, or Podgorny. Brezhnev would then stand out that much more within the leadership in terms of prestige and experience, but it is highly doubtful that their power would all flow into Brezhnev's hands, especially in light of his own reduced work pace. Some of it would probably go to other Politburo members, enabling them to assert their own voices more fully on key policy issues. And if, meanwhile, new leaders were entering the top circle, some of them also would gradually make their presence felt as they acquired confidence in handling new policy responsibilities and a sense of their own weight in Politburo-level deliberations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOVIET POLICY

The Near Term. Brezhnev's authority appears in the aftermath of the congress to be stronger than seemed to be the case several months ago. Soviet successes in improving the USSR's position in certain relations, also reduce Brezhnev's vulnerability to any allegations that his policies vis-a-vis the West adversely affect Soviet opportunities or unduly constrain Soviet policies in other parts of the world. Insofar as the next steps in US-Soviet relations depend on Brezhnev's authority--as to some extent they certainly must--he is evidently in a better position than before to make his personal preferences count. Brezhnev, and for that matter the rest of the leadership, fear that continued drift in US-Soviet relations may give stronger political voice to "anti-Soviet" elements in the US and perhaps further jeopardize Soviet interests.

Among the factors shading Moscow's present view of the US-Soviet relationship, however, is a serious doubt about the US ability to bargain effectively with the USSR. Whatever Brezhnev's policy inclinations and internal power position, this belief is

bound to persist in the period leading up to the US election. The Soviet attitude toward the prospects of improving relations with the US depends greatly on Politburo calculations as to how domestic political pressures may affect the actions of the incumbent US President and whether Soviet interests would be better served by marking time until the election is over in the belief or hope that a different US attitude will follow.

After Brezhnev. Brezhnev's style of leadership and record make it unlikely that policy dissatisfactions will accumulate to the point of bringing him down, and although he may not recognize the best time to leave, it is probable that he will be permitted to go honorably. There have been rumors in the past that he might be named to a new post, perhaps similar to chairman of a Council of State, such as exists in some other Communist states. If he leaves with his reputation essentially intact, the leadership practices of the Brezhnev era will probably be held up as an example for his successors to follow. When Brezhnev leaves the scene entirely, there would almost inevitably be a reassertion of greater collectivity among the top leaders. Although the central role of the General Secretary in the Soviet system virtually ensures that his successor would become the most powerful man in the top leadership, he would not automatically inherit Brezhnev's authority in its entirety.

If Kirilenko succeeds him, he would probably oversee policy-making in a manner similar to Brezhnev's, seeking to formulate consensus positions and to build support for them, but probably without as much capacity initially for bringing issues to the point of final decision or shaping the nature of such decisions by use of his personal authority. Any successor, in attempting to establish his authority, might seek to push for decisions to show that his leadership can be effective. In fact, all the leaders would want to demonstrate that the new regime is capable of setting policy lines and taking decisive actions. But leaders other than the General Secretary would also want to make their mark, and they would be wary of permitting the top man too great a head of steam.

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Since the succession to Brezhnev is likely to involve a greater turnover of leaders than was the case in 1964, there would probably be a prolonged period--perhaps of several years in duration--in which the new internal Politburo working style and division of labor would evolve within the changed constellation of personalities. In this unsettled period when the apportionment of relative personal influence is being worked out, difficult decisions would be subject to delays and compromises as the new leaders took the time to weigh extra carefully the internal political consequences of any policy choice. Their decisions would therefore probably not be broad initiatives aimed at resolving long-standing knotty questions, but more modest actions with which they could all feel comfortable.

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